

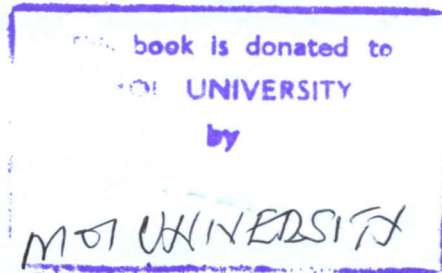
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STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING AND DEMOCRATIC PRACTICE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS: THE CASE OF CENTRAL RIFT REGION OF KENYA



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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the extent of democratization of schools through student participation in decision making in secondary schools in Kenya. The research was conducted in the Central Rift Region of Kenya focusing on boarding secondary schools. The Social Justice theory (John Rawls, 1996) and Democratic Theory (Iris Young, 2000) underpinned the study. The study objectives were to establish the nature and extent of student participation in decision making; to establish effectiveness of student participation in decision making strategies in enhancing democratic practice in schools; to identify hindrances to student participation in decision making in schools and to establish the student participation in decision making by school contexts. Proportional stratified random sampling was done to select the 15 boarding secondary schools from a population of 83 schools. 2 national, 4 provincial, 5 district schools were selected to form a total of 11 public schools. In addition, 4 private schools were sampled. Simple random sampling was thereafter undertaken to select 20 students from each school thus forming a sample of 300 students. 2 language teachers were purposively selected from every school in the sample to respond to the questionnaire. Purposive sampling was done to select 6 head teachers who were interviewed. Descriptive Cross sectional survey research design was adopted. Data was collected by means of a questionnaire administered to students and teachers. Head teachers were further interviewed. Data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics (frequencies, means and percentages) was calculated to summarize the findings. The t- test and the kruskal wallis test comprised the relational analysis of data. The findings indicated a lack of student participation in major decision making areas. It was found out that students were only involved in areas considered appropriate for them mainly in setting achievement targets and in cleanliness. Moreover, it was found out those secondary school students encountered challenges in giving their views to the administration. The study therefore concluded that student participation strategies adopted in the schools were ineffective in enhancing democratic practice in secondary schools. Results from relational analysis of data found significant difference in student participation in decision making by school type and location but found no difference by school category. Based on the findings, the study recommended representation of student in key decision making bodies in public schools; namely the BOG and PTA. Effort should also *be made* to develop a democratic culture among the youth by introducing student council, research clubs, student parliament and *baraza* system in schools. These communication channels would enable the students develop a culture of dialogue, discussion and compromise- key tenets in a democracy- in handling conflicts in place of violence currently in vogue.